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C O N T E N T S

25X1D

25X1A

3. SITUATION IN INDONESIA [redacted] (page 5).

25X1A

4. LEFTISTS DOMINATE NEW SYRIAN CABINET [redacted]
(page 6).

25X1

25X1

6. LAOTIAN CABINET APPROVES COALITION WITH PATHET
LAO [redacted] (page 8).

25X1D

Approved For Release 2002/07/12 : CIA-RDP79T00975A002900230001-4

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

Approved For Release 2002/07/12 : CIA-RDP79T00975A002900230001-4

25X1A

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3. SITUATION IN INDONESIA

Comment on:

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Col. Simbolon, rebel leader in northern Sumatra, reportedly has retreated with upwards of a battalion of troops and artillery to the southeast of Medan, where the hilly terrain and sympathetic population are in his favor. He is in position to join forces with Lt. Col. Hussein, the dissident leader in central Sumatra. Hussein has just issued another defiant statement ordering his troops to disobey any orders from Djakarta.

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Meanwhile, continuing unrest in Indonesia has caused President Sukarno to proclaim a "state of war and siege" in southern Sumatra. The governor there has suspended the forwarding of revenue to Djakarta and may be under increasing public pressure to dissociate himself still further from the central government.

In the Celebes, territorial commander Lt. Col. Samual reportedly has issued a statement confirming that territory's dissatisfaction with the central government. His comment that there are other than military means to express this dissatisfaction suggests that he is not yet prepared to follow the course of Simbolon and Hussein.

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4. LEFTISTS DOMINATE NEW SYRIAN CABINET

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Comment on:

The composition of the new Syrian cabinet announced on 31 December represents a victory for leftist, pro-Egyptian elements. The conservative members of the previous cabinet have been eliminated and only one new rightist has been named. The conservative Populist Party, which holds the largest single bloc of seats in parliament, is not represented.

While Asali is the prime minister, the major power in the 11-man cabinet appears to be the extreme pro-Egyptian and leftist, Khalid al-Azm, who has been appointed minister of state and acting minister of defense. Four other ministers are Azm followers. Two ministers from the left-wing Arab Socialist Resurrection Party continue to hold the portfolios of foreign affairs and national economy. One Azm supporter, a minister of state, attended two World Peace Congresses.

The leftists may now call for a new election in order to eliminate conservative elements and obtain a "more representative" parliament. In foreign affairs, the trend toward close relations with Egypt and closer association with the Soviet bloc probably will be intensified, as will the present campaign against the Baghdad pact and the pro-Western government in Iraq.

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6. LAOTIAN CABINET APPROVES COALITION WITH PATHET LAO

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Comment on:

The entry of Pathet Lao representatives into the Laotian government appears to be assured as a result of an agreement signed by Premier Souvanna Phouma and Pathet chief Souphanouvong on 28 December. This agreement, which is highly favorable to the Pathet Lao, has already been accepted by the cabinet and probably

will be approved by the National Assembly sometime before 10 January. Souphanouvong is leaving for Sam Neua on 1 January to consult with his colleagues, and their approval appears to be certain in view of the speedy announcement by Peiping, under a Hanoi date line, that agreement had been reached.

The agreement provides for a coalition cabinet and the establishment of the Pathets as a legal party, the restoration of the government's control over the disputed provinces, and the integration of Pathet forces into the royal army. The details of these vital matters, however, remain to be worked out by mixed political and military commissions, where the Pathets will be in the advantageous position of influencing negotiations from both sides of the table. Once in the government, moreover, they can also be expected to use their position to build political alliances and front organizations in preparation for the supplementary nationwide elections to be held in March to expand the legislature from 39 to 60 seats.

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